

sales events, but a day to remember and honor the ultimate sacrifice given by members of our Armed Forces. This is a man who truly embodies the spirit of America.

Justin Arsenault, let me both thank and congratulate you on your exceptional service to our country and community both past and present. It is my pleasure to award you the 2013 Congressional Veteran Commendation for the Third District of Texas.

CONTINUING APPROPRIATIONS RESOLUTION, 2014

SPEECH OF

HON. SHEILA JACKSON LEE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 12, 2013

Ms. JACKSON LEE. Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak on H. J. Res. 59, the "Bipartisan Budget Act of 2013 and Pathway for Sustainable Growth in Medicare Reform Act of 2013."

On the positive side: Republicans—and the bipartisan deal does not cut Medicare, Social Security, or Medicaid benefits by a penny even though our friends across the aisle went into the talks insisting on cuts to programs like Head Start, Housing, Social Security, Medicaid, and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Programs that sustain children, families, and seniors.

The agreement increases discretionary spending caps under the 2011 Budget Control Act (BCA) for FY 2014 and FY 2015 to partially restore spending cuts that would otherwise be made those two years under the sequester required by the BCA.

Under the measure, the sequester for FY 2014 and FY 2015 would be reduced to restore \$63 billion in spending authority for those two years—while \$85 billion in cuts to mandatory programs and revenue increases would be made to more than offset that increased spending and provide for a net \$23 billion in deficit reduction.

BUDGET CAPS & SEQUESTRATION

The budget proposal increases FY 2014 discretionary spending by \$45 billion and FY 2015 spending by \$18 billion compared with their scheduled sequestration levels, with the increases equally split each year between defense and non-defense spending (a \$22.4 billion increase for each category this year and a \$9 billion increase for each in FY 2015).

Those increases would set a \$1.012 trillion limit on discretionary spending for FY 2014 and a \$1.014 trillion limit for FY 2015. Under the current stopgap funding law, discretionary spending set at the woefully inadequate sequestration level of \$986 billion.

Under the new caps, defense spending for FY 2014 would be set at \$520.5 billion (about \$2 billion more than current funding), while nondefense spending would be increased to \$491.8 billion.

Because of the circumstances that led to the budget impasse during the first session of the 113th Congress, I introduced H. Res. 375, a bill expressing the sense of the House of Representatives that Congress should refrain from shutting down the Federal government or conditioning the resolution of fiscal and budgetary disputes on the taking of action relating to non-germane legislative matters.

I invite members from both sides of the aisle to co-sponsor H. Res. 375.

The budget proposal before us is not perfect—far from it—but it is a modest and positive step toward preventing Republicans from shutting down the government again and manufacturing crises that only harm our economy, destroy jobs, and weaken our middle class.

A self-manufactured crisis by the Republican majority resulted in a government shutdown that lasted 16 days and cost taxpayers \$24 billion.

The cost to Federal employees and the people they serve cannot be calculated.

As with any compromise there are some things in the agreement that I support and some things that I strongly oppose.

The agreement allows Congress to move forward in meeting its obligations to the American people by alleviating some of the damage being caused by sequestration.

It is useful to chronicle the severity of the suffering and pain inflicted by sequestration on the most vulnerable residents of Texas and the Constituents that I serve.

SEQUESTRATION IMPACTS ON TEXAS

Head Start and Early Head Start services were eliminated or severely impacted with approximately 4,800 children being impacted throughout the state of Texas.

Families in my district who rely on Federal Government programs like Head Start are hurting. The pain did not start with the shutdown, but with sequestration which hit Head Start programs for 3 to 4 year olds in the Houston area hard: \$5,341 million cut; 109 Employees cut; 699 Slots for children cut.

Head Start and Early Head Start Programs were further stressed by the federal government shutdown.

On October 2, I joined hundreds of Head Start supporters from across the country and many of my colleagues to protest the closing of Head Start programs due to the federal government shutdown.

I picked up one of the tiny blue chairs that represented the thousands of Head Start children from around the nation and said that an empty Head Start chair represents a future doctor, engineer, president, or teacher who is at risk because of the Federal Government shutdown.

My support of Head Start and Early Head Start is based on what I have seen and heard about programs like the AVANCE-Houston Early Head Start program serving parents and children in the 18th Congressional District.

The AVANCE-Houston Early Head Start is a program serving low income families in my Houston Texas District.

I visited with AVANCE-Houston administrators earlier this month because I wanted to get an update on how low-income families with infants and toddlers and pregnant women served by the program were doing.

The AVANCE-Houston Early Head Start's mission is simple: AVANCEHouston works for healthy prenatal outcomes for pregnant women, enhance the development of very young children, and promote healthy family functioning.

AVANCE-Houston serves nearly 1,800 children city wide. Each of these families and their children are suffering the effect of the legislative malpractice of the House majority.

Sequestration has cost AVANCE-Houston \$842,518 Head Start and Early Head Start in lost funding for ending the harmful effects of Sequestration on programs like Head Start had to be a priority.

SEQUESTRATION AND HOUSE BUDGET BILL'S NEGATIVE IMPACT ON THE SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANT PROGRAM (SNAP)

The House Republicans' Farm Bill proposed cutting our nation's food assistance programs, known as SNAP, by \$20.5 billion to stay within the unrealistic funding limitations set by sequestration even though a cut of this magnitude would deprive millions of children, seniors, disabled persons, and families of the benefits they need to survive in an economy that has not yet fully recovered from the worst recession since the Great Depression.

SNAP FACTS

In the 18th Congressional District an estimated 151,741 families live in poverty.

According to the Census my city of Houston more than 442,881 persons live near the poverty level.

The percentage of Texas households experiencing food insecurity (18%) ranked second only to Mississippi.

WE KNOW THAT THERE IS HUNGER IN AMERICA

For more than 40 years, SNAP has offered nutrition assistance to millions of low income individuals and families. Today, the SNAP program serves over 46 million people each month. Households with children receive about 75 percent of all food stamp benefits. 23 percent of households include a disabled person and 18 percent of households include an elderly person. The FSP increases household food spending, and the increase is greater than what would occur with an equal benefit in cash. Every \$5 in new food stamp benefits generates almost twice as much (\$9.20) in total community spending.

According to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), 16.7 million children under 18 in the United States live in households where they are unable to consistently access enough nutritious food for a healthy life.

FOOD INSECURITY

16.7 million Children lived in food insecure households in 2011.

20 percent or more of the child population in 37 states and D.C. lived in food insecure households in 2011.

EMERGENCY FOOD ASSISTANCE

Nearly 14 million children are estimated to be served by Feeding America, over 3 million of which are ages 5 and under.

54 percent of client households with children under the age of 3 participated in the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC).

POVERTY

In 2011, 16.1 million or approximately 22 percent of children in the U.S. lived in poverty: Participation in Federal Nutrition Programs.

In fiscal year 2011, 47 percent of all SNAP household contained children.

During the 2011 federal fiscal year, more than 31 million low-income children received free or reduced-price meals through the National School Lunch Program.

Unfortunately, just 2.3 million children participated in the Summer Food Service Program that same year.

This proposed budget protects SNAP programs from crippling cuts for 2014–2015.

In addition to providing relief from sequestration there are a number of other good provisions in the Budget Agreement. For example:

THE BUDGET AGREEMENT PROTECTS SOCIAL SECURITY AND MEDICARE

The budget agreement blocks a scheduled 23.7 percent reduction in the Medicare reimbursement rate for physician services set to occur January 1, in order to meet the sustainable growth rate. Instead, the measure's so-called "doc fix" provides a 0.5 percent increase for the first three months of 2014, and it also extends more than a dozen Medicare-related programs.

The budget deal makes sure that doctors who treat seniors have a guarantee of payment for the medical services they provide.

The budget agreement also addresses the issue of payments to hospitals that treat large numbers of uninsured patients.

The budget also makes changes to payment rates for inpatient services in long-term care hospitals.

Congressional Budget Office estimates that the three-month doc fix would cost \$7.3 billion and that the efforts to reduce the burden to taxpayers would reduce spending by \$9 billion.

The net direct spending for health care related programs, after factoring expansion of health care programs, would be an overall budget reduction of \$300 million over 10 years.

The agreement scales back the proposed cuts to federal employees sought by Republicans and exempts current federal employees.

Federal employees under the budget agreement would receive a pay increase—the first in three years.

Sequestration cuts would be diminished under this budget agreement, which opens the Federal government up for new hires in the coming year.

Federal employees are making contributions toward budget reduction considering the three years of no cost of living increases and the increased contributions toward retirement plans for new government hires and military retirees.

ON THE NEGATIVE SIDE:

Mr. Speaker, it is outrageous—it is scandalous—that the budget agreement does not include an extension of unemployment insurance for the 1.3 million jobless workers will have their benefits cut off on December 28, and nearly another 1.9 million will lose their unemployment benefits over the first half of next year.

If Congress does not extend unemployment insurance, an additional 3.6 million workers will lose access to benefits in 2014.

In Texas, 68,900 jobless workers will lose their unemployment benefits on December 28th.

An additional 106,900 Texas workers will lose access to benefits in 2014.

UNEMPLOYMENT RATES

The national unemployment rate remains at 7 percent and the unemployment rate in Texas sits at 6.4 percent.

This is no time to reduce unemployment insurance.

Unemployment Insurance was not designed to be a lifelong program, but a means of addressing short-term unemployment that most Americans experience over the course of their work lives.

The unusual circumstances of a global recession that began in the United States with the access and abuse of our nation's financial and mortgage insurance systems that trapped homeowners with mortgages that were much higher than the value of their homes.

This fiscal situation strained our nation's economic system then to add the cost of two wars fought at the same time for nearly a decade the nation's economy could not take the strain and by the end of 2008 the Great Recession could not be ignored.

It took time to create the economic down turn and it will take time for communities, families and workers to recover. The unemployment insurance program should reflect that reality by providing support to workers until the economy is fully recovered.

If Congress does not act immediately to extend these benefits, a devastating blow will be dealt not only to the millions of Americans who are already struggling, but to our economy.

That is why yesterday I joined more than 170 of Democratic colleagues in calling upon Speaker BOEHNER not to adjourn this House for the year without extending the vital unemployment insurance desperately needed by millions of our fellow citizens.

To let their benefits expire in the middle of the holiday season is cruel and heartless and unworthy of a great and generous nation.

Cutting off unemployment benefits at the end of the year will only further hurt an economy already injured by sequestration and the Republican government shutdown.

The Congressional Budget Office estimated that 750,000 fewer jobs will be created or retained in calendar year 2013 because of the budget cuts under sequestration.

The government shutdown cost our economy an additional 120,000 jobs and \$24 billion in tax dollars in the first two weeks of October alone, according to the Council of Economic Advisors.

The Economic Policy Institute estimates that cutting off extended unemployment benefits would cost our economy 310,000 jobs next year because of reduced consumer demand.

Other experts, like Michael Feroli, the chief economist at JPMorgan Chase, indicate that allowing the federal unemployment insurance (UI) program to expire could shave as much as 0.4 percentage point off our economy's growth in the first quarter of 2014.

Letting unemployment benefits expire will deprive our economy of the positive impact unemployment insurance provides since financially stressed unemployed workers spend any benefits they receive quickly.

CBO also concluded in a 2012 report that assistance for the unemployed has one of the "largest effects on employment per dollar of budgetary cost."

This is why I will be introducing a bill to extend the emergency Unemployment compensation program by an additional 12 months.

A colleague recounted what happened when Wal-Mart sought to fill 600 positions—23,000 people came to apply for positions.

Although employment rates have improved the numbers of unemployed persons still has the nation at a 7 percent unemployment rate.

The length of time people are unemployed is a serious indication that this recovery is not vigorous enough or strong enough to take away money that is needed to keep people in housing and allow them more time to find employment.

It is estimated that there are approximately 4 million jobs available and 12 million persons unemployed.

There is speculation that businesses are reluctant to hire because of the uncertainty cre-

ated by the dysfunction exhibited by Congress especially during 2013.

This is yet another reason why the budget agreement is important to pass, although it does not have everything I would want. It may signal to business that Congress is ready to get down to work on our nation's problems and not threaten economic calamity by not raising the debt ceiling and thereby threatening not to meet our fiscal obligations.

Congress cannot close its eyes and hope that businesses will start hiring—the purpose of unemployment insurance is the same purpose of any insurance—when it is needed for as long as it is needed it must be available.

I am not closing my eyes, Mr. Speaker; I will be introducing a bill to extend unemployment insurance for the 12 million Americans who are still in need of support until the economy is healthy again.

CONTINUING APPROPRIATIONS RESOLUTION, 2014

SPEECH OF

HON. RUSH HOLT

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, December 12, 2013

Mr. HOLT. Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to this new Ryan-Murray budget agreement because it is a strong continuation of an anti-government, pessimistic policy that has been plaguing Washington in recent years.

Make no mistake about it; this budget agreement is the direct result of the Budget Control Act, which I strongly opposed when it was being debated 2011, and this agreement takes us backwards. I knew then sequester would wreak havoc on our economy, threaten our quality of life, and squeeze the most vulnerable among us.

Here we are, over two years later, and the worst of it is coming true. The sequester has cut research, education, infrastructure, Medicare, and a number of other critical investments that are vital to a growing economy. It is robbing America of the opportunity to rise from the Great Recession as a stronger, more vibrant nation. Instead, the sequester is continuing to weaken our country with a shrunken government that is hampered by deep cuts to the safety net and hobbled by a refusal to invest in our future. This budget agreement from Congressman RYAN and Senator MURRAY is a way to partially and minimally reverse cuts that should never have happened in the first place.

It is a compromise in a narrow, Washington kind of sense: It will gain some votes from Democrats and some votes from Republicans. But let's remember how the BCA came to be enacted: In 2011, Republicans held hostage America's credit rating by threatening to default on our debts if they didn't get what they wanted. No true compromise was possible then because the negotiations were conducted in the midst of a hostage crisis. No compromise is possible now because we are still operating within the framework created by that hostage crisis.

The question we should ask ourselves is, "Where are we trying to go as a country?" We should be striving toward an optimistic future—one where we invest in research, education, infrastructure, and more. By that measure, this is a bad deal.